

# FITNESS

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## **Cross-Training Includes Fun and Fitness**

Tired of the same old workout? Looking for a level of fitness that your current exercise routine can't offer? Are you experiencing nagging injuries that just don't seem to heal? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are a likely candidate for cross training.

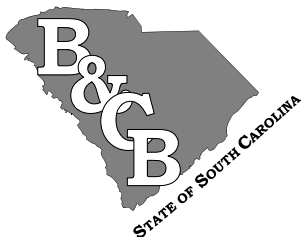
Cross training is simply a way of adding variety to your exercise program. You can vary your aerobic routine and incorporate some muscular strength and flexibility training as well. And if you think cross training is new, think again. Athletes have been cross training since the days of the Olympic decathlons and pentathlons of ancient Greece. The past decade has seen the popularity of the triathlon reach international proportions, introducing the concept of cross training to even the most recreational athletes.

The benefits of cross training are numerous. It reduces the risk of injury because the same muscles, bones and joints are not continuously subjected to the stresses of the same activity. Cross training also adds variety to your workouts, making your routine more interesting and easier to stick with. For the athlete, it provides a break from the rigors and stresses of single-sport training. Cross training will improve your overall fitness and over an extended period of time, may ultimately lead to improved performance.

Whether you are new to exercise or a competitive athlete, the essentials of cross training are the same. You can choose to vary your routine from workout to workout, or simply add a new component within your existing exercise program. One of the easiest ways to start cross training is to alternate between activities - walking one day, swimming or bicycling the next. Or, you can alternate these activities within a single workout, spending five minutes on a treadmill, five minutes on a stationary cycle, and so on for a total of 20 minutes.

More experienced exercisers might begin an hour-long workout with a 15-minute jog to a nearby pool. After a 20-minute swim and perhaps a few minutes of calisthenics, they can finish off their workout with a 15-minute jog back home and several minutes of flexibility exercises. If you're looking to increase your endurance level, try alternating low-level aerobic activities, such as 20 minutes of stationary cycling, with 10 minutes of higher-intensity exercise, such as stair-stepping or jumping rope. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend on the more intense activity.

All exercise sessions, whether they involve cross training or not, should begin and end with low-level aerobic exercise and stretching to effectively warm up and cool down. Remember that it's always a good idea to check with your doctor before beginning a new exercise program.



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